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Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum*

Replies received from Governments

Egypt

[18 October 2006]

1. Egypt is fully committed to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It was at the request of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Egypt that the item entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East" was first included in the agenda of the General Assembly in 1974. Since that date, the Assembly has annually adopted a resolution, by consensus since 1980, on this matter. Throughout the years, Egypt has continued to play a consistently leading role in promoting the objective of ridding the Middle East of the threat of nuclear weapons.

2. As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and a signatory to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty), Egypt has clearly and unambiguously demonstrated its rejection of nuclear weapons, since they represent a major threat to peace, security and stability in the Middle East today. Egypt notes that while all other States of the Middle East have become parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Israel regrettably persists in ignoring repeated calls for its adherence to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy

* The information in the present addendum was received after the submission of the main report.

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Agency (IAEA) safeguards, thereby perpetuating a dangerous imbalance in the region.

3. The importance given during the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is testimony to the commitment of the international community to the establishment of such a zone. The 2000 Review Conference, in following up the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, unanimously reaffirmed, in its final document, the importance of the accession of Israel to the Treaty and placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. Indeed, in its final document, the 2000 Review Conference:

> ... recalls that in paragraph 4 of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, the Conference calls upon all States in the Middle East that have not yet done so, without exception, to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. The Conference notes, in this connection, that the report of the United Nations Secretariat on the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East (NPT/CONF.2000/7) states that several States have acceded to the Treaty and that, with these accessions, all States of the region of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, are States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Conference welcomes the accession of these States and reaffirms the importance of Israel's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East (see NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I and II), part I, sect. entitled "Article VII", para. 16).

4. In addition to urgent calls for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, inter alia, in the context of the Treaty review process, IAEA, the General Assembly and the Security Council called upon Israel in a number of resolutions to urgently place its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of IAEA (Council resolution 487 (1981)) and recalled the objective of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East (Council resolution 687 (1991)).

5. While recognizing that each region of the world has its own characteristics and each zone must be tailored to suit them, Egypt does not share the view that full-scale peace and fully developed political and economic relations among all States of the region are a prerequisite for the commencement of negotiations on the establishment of such a zone. If such an argument were correct, the Treaty of Tlatelolco or even the Treaty of Pelindaba would never have been negotiated. Regrettably, conflict continues to rage in various parts of Africa to this very day, yet such conflicts were not invoked as reasons to prevent negotiations on an African nuclear-weapon-free zone. Egypt firmly believes that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in areas of tension of conflict does indeed contribute significantly to easing tension, building confidence, preventing conflicts and developing peaceful relations and mutual cooperation.

6. Therefore, making negotiations on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East contingent upon an ever growing list of prerequisites is a sure recipe for failure. Egypt believes that the only prerequisite for negotiations on measures for

the establishment of a zone in the Middle East is that States in the region have the political will. Viewing the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone as no more than an act that "sets the seal on a durable peace" is not a vision that is shared by Egypt. Furthermore, maintaining that fully fledged relations of peace must exist between Israel and its neighbours before talks on such a zone can commence is a contradictory argument.

7. For a nuclear-weapon-free zone to come about in any area of the world, there must exist a regional commitment to that objective. As is shown by the annual adoption of a consensus resolution on the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone by the General Assembly; and by the adoption of consensus guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones; on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned, by the Disarmament Commission at its 1999 substantive session, such a commitment is present in the Middle East. Egypt notes with satisfaction that there is wide agreement that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and the development of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction should be encouraged. Egypt considers that it is imperative that those commitments be turned into concrete actions if they are to have a determining and positive impact on the Middle East peace process.

8. However, while Egypt continues to table its annual resolution entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", it cannot help but notice that the adoption of the resolution by consensus is not complemented by an equally consensual commitment to its implementation. Indeed, not all of the States Members of the United Nations seem committed to acting effectively with a view to ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons. Few concrete steps, if any have been taken with the aim of realizing the objectives of the resolution. This situation endures despite the international community's invigorated commitment to the cause of non-proliferation.

9. The commencement of negotiations on the establishment of the zone would represent a breakthrough in the efforts geared towards building confidence in the region, efforts the objectives of which are getting increasingly difficult to realize, in an atmosphere of insecurity and while a nuclear threat continues to loom over the region, provoking even more risks and challenges of proliferation.

10. The international community has paid much attention to recent cases of proliferation concern, sometimes seeking new approaches, and always devoted significant resources to the task. Yet, Israel escapes similar attention, and is subjected to little more than lukewarm verbal calls for adherence to the Treaty and the application of IAEA safeguards.

11. In this regard, the following key developments have taken place since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 60/52:

(a) Egypt continued to stress the importance of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in all relevant multilateral forums, both regional and international, and has conducted bilateral consultations in Cairo as well as in other capitals across the globe to that end, including in key countries in the Middle East.

(b) Egypt paid special attention to maintaining its active participation in major international meetings, including conferences, workshops and other events dedicated to discussions on the subject, and reiterated its position throughout the

interaction of senior government representatives with the media, non-governmental organizations and related academic institutions.

(c) Egypt endeavoured to convene the forum which the IAEA General Conference requested the Director General to make arrangements for, and in which participants from the Middle East and other interested parties could learn from the experience of other regions, including in the area of confidence-building relevant to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Despite the flexibility shown by Egypt, the convening of the forum has been so far prevented by disagreement over the agenda.

(d) During the IAEA Board of Governors meeting on 4 February 2006, Egypt voted in favour of reporting to the Security Council on progress made in the compliance of the Islamic Republic of Iran with its Treaty safeguards obligations. In this context, Egypt stressed the importance of a non-discriminatory regional approach to resolving the issue, and of addressing the security concerns of all regional States.

(e) The Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement at their fourteenth Conference, held in Havana, in September 2006:

> Demanded that Israel, the only country in the region that has not joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or declared its intention to do so renounce its possession of nuclear weapons, accede to the Treaty without delay, place promptly all its nuclear facilities under IAEA full-scope safeguards, and conduct its nuclear-related activities in conformity with the non-proliferation regime. They expressed great concern over the acquisition of a nuclear capability by Israel, which poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States, and condemned Israel for continuing to develop and stockpile nuclear arsenals. They were of the view that stability cannot be achieved in a region where massive imbalances in military capabilities are maintained, particularly through the possession of nuclear weapons, which allow one party to threaten its neighbours and the region.

(f) At the thirty-third session of the Organization of the Islamic Conference held in Baku, in June 2006, the Foreign Ministers supported in their declaration the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and, pending the establishment of such a zone, demanded Israel's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty without delay and prompt placement of all its nuclear facilities under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system.

(g) The technical committee of the League of Arab States assigned the task of preparing a draft treaty to turn the Middle East into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, continued its work throughout the year; its latest meeting was held in June 2006.

(h) On the bilateral level, Egypt continued to maintain contacts with States with special responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security to promote the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, pursuant to relevant United Nations resolutions and in accordance with their pledge reflected, inter alia, by the adoption of the resolution on the Middle East of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, which was the key component in a package

allowing the indefinite extension of the Treaty. The implementation of that resolution is thus of crucial importance to the credibility of the Treaty and its objectives. In this context, Egypt held bilateral consultations throughout the year with high-level delegations and officials of a significant number of States, and conducted exchanges with a number of senior representatives of relevant international organizations.

12. Egypt will continue to pursue the objective of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East at the earliest date, based on relevant Security Council resolutions, the outcome of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and that of the 2000 Review Conference. It will also pursue the 1974 initiative on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, paving the way for the eventual realization of its April 1990 initiative for the establishment, in the Middle East, of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction. In its endeavours, it will continue to seek the support of the international community and of all States that are committed to ridding the world, at both the regional and global levels, of the threat of nuclear weapons.